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IRISH LIBRARY.—No. 1.*

By REV. WILLIAM REEVES, D.D.

COLGAN'S WORKS.

THE greatest boon that ever was conferred upon Irish literature was the publication of Dempster's *Menologium Sanctorum Scotorum*. This book, taking it as an axiom that Scotia, wherever the name occurred, meant Scotland, transferred to Caledonia the greater part of that noble army of confessors who were known in history as Scots, and whose memory was as fresh in the 'Insula Sanctorum' as if they had been but just dead; for the author of it acquired the title of *Hagiokleptes* or 'Saint-Stealer,' and it set the Irish upon the recovery of their historical property: it excited Hugh Ward to put in motion the intellectual machinery which was represented by Fleming, the O'Clerys, and Colgan; and produced the undying memorials of Irish industry, the *Annals of the Four Masters*, the *Collectanea*, and the *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniæ*.

John Colgan, the compiler of the last mentioned work,—to whose labours the Irish Antiquary and Ecclesiastical Historian are under endless obligations,—was born towards the close of the sixteenth century, near the village of Carn, in the parish of Donagh, barony of Innishowen, and County of Donegal. This we learn from an incidental remark in one of his own notes, where, speaking of St. Maccarthen of Donagh-mor, he observes—"in cujus et agro ego natus fui." (*Tr. Th. p. 181 a. n. 173.*) The family name was MacColgan, which is still the prevalent one in that part of the parish which is called Glentogher, and lies about two miles from Carn. Colgan is the genitive case of Colga, a name of frequent occurrence in the *Annals*, and requires such a prefix as Mac or O to give correctness to the form. However, like Erin, and Alban, which are really inflections, it has come to be used absolutely. The name MacColgan occurs only once in the *Four Masters*, namely, at A.D. 1212. Colganus is the Latinized form adopted by our author, and the one commonly used, as we see by an inscription on an old tombstone in Donagh Church yard:

DONATVS COLGA
NVS - - - DON
ACH ME FIERI FECIT 6
DIE AVGVTI AN. DO.
MINI 1703.

* Under this head it is intended to furnish, in each part, bibliographical notices of one or more standard

works in the department of Irish History and Antiquities.

Born and educated in a part of Ireland where Irish was exclusively spoken, young MacColgan acquired, from the earliest age, a familiarity with that language which he afterwards turned to such inestimable account. Being designed for the priesthood, he also acquired a knowledge of the Latin tongue, which he so improved as to be able in after life to write in it with ease and elegance; although, with characteristic modesty, he urges his "*tenuem in hac re facultatem*" as a plea for the indulgence of his reader. We know nothing of his subsequent history until we find him at the Irish College of Louvain, which had been founded in 1616, for the education of Irish Franciscans of Strict Observance, and afforded an asylum to Irish refugees, whom the civil and religious revolutions of their country had compelled to abandon their native land. Here he was advanced to the honourable post of Jubilate Lecturer in Theology, a situation which had been previously filled by Patrick Fleming, and Hugh Ward. The latter made way for him by becoming Warden of the college, his whole soul being now embarked in the noble project of establishing the ancient ecclesiastical honours of Ireland by such a mass of original evidence as should for ever set the question at rest, and, at the same time, present to the country a complete biography of its saints. To this end no exertions were spared in gathering both at home and abroad the Lives of Irish saints, whether in Latin or Irish, in monographs or collections, making transcripts where the originals could not be obtained. Brother Michael O'Clery was busily employed in Ireland, collecting the ancient martyrologies, and compiling a copious digest of them; the Annals of the 'Four Masters,' of whom he was the principal, commenced in 1632, was then within a year of being completed; some of the obscure Irish compositions had been rendered into Latin; and all were on the eve of being arranged for annotation and the press; when the untimely death of Ward, on the 8th of November, 1635, abruptly terminated his proceedings. Providentially John Colgan was on the spot, and in every way qualified to carry into effect his Superior's intentions. He enlisted the services of another Irishman, brother Brendan O'Connor, who brought important additions to his store from the libraries of France and Italy, and, having with unwearied diligence assisted Colgan in adjusting all his materials for his first volume, proceeded to Ireland, where, notwithstanding the political troubles of the country, he busied himself in 1645 in gleaning up the scattered records which had escaped the brethren of Donegal.

Among the names of Colgan's contributors, those of Patrick Fleming and Stephen White are worthy of special mention; they brought transcripts of many valuable Irish lives from the libraries of France, Germany, and Italy, some of which were printed, and others laid by in store. In the enumeration of his valued fellow-labourers, our author, with graceful modesty and candour, makes the following profession: "These services of the various persons who aided me in the furtherance of my undertaking, I record with pleasure, as well that each may receive the acknowledgement and praise which his pious labours deserve, as that I may not appear to arrogate to myself the credit which is due to many, in an undertaking where I cannot lay claim to anything except the feeble industry which I owe to my country, or expend anything except the zeal which long ago I pledged by vow to the One God and the Saints, for the reward which is known to them. Nor even, were I so disposed,

could I claim much credit to myself in this matter; for, as I have before observed, all the lives of the saints in this, and the following volumes, except a few which have been translated from the Irish and other languages, and some more that were obtained in other quarters, are set out nearly entire and complete as they had been collected and put together by the Rev. Father Hugh Ward; to whom the others above-mentioned supplied the records which were calculated to augment or improve his collection. To these, which I have furnished with chapters, marginal remarks, notes, and appendices, I have added nothing but some shorter lives gathered out of the same or other documents; which, occurring at almost every day, though more numerous, are greatly inferior in fulness and value to those which he had collected. For which reason it was my desire, when the task of enlarging and illustrating the work was committed to me, to publish the whole under the name of Father Ward; under which it was partly prepared, and would certainly have been presented to the public, were it not that my superiors and friends, influenced by the numerical amount of my gleanings, and other motives than my wishes, thought otherwise."

Accordingly on the 24th of November 1643, the printing of the work was commenced, and in July, 1645, appeared the first fruits of his labours, under the following title: *ACTA SANCTORUM VETERIS ET MAJORIS SCOTIE SEU HIBERNIE, SANCTORUM INSULÆ, PER JOHANNEM COLGANUM, In Conventu F. Minorum Hibernie Strictior. Observantiae Louanii, S. Theologie Lectorem Jubilatum. Tomus Primus, Qui de Sacris Hibernie Antiquitatibus est Tertius. Lovanii, apud Everardum De Witte, MDCXLV. Fol. pp. 906.*

The contents of this volume are as follows:

Dedication to Hugo Ragallius, (O'Reilly,) Archbishop of Armagh, pp. 1-7., (unnumbered.)

Præfatio ad Lectorem, pp. 8-17. (unnumbered.)

Faculties and Approbations, pp. 18-22. (Do.)

Index of Saints in the order of their days.

Index ii., of Irish Saints venerated abroad.

Acts for January, pp. 1-228.

——February, pp. 229-424.

——March, pp. 425-800.

Mutata et Addenda, pp. 801-805.

Primus Index, Hystoricus, pp. 806-828.

Secundus Index, Chronologicus, pp. 829-837.

Tertius Index, Hystoricus, (of Saints venerated at home,) pp. 838-858.

——Pars II., of (Saints who went to foreign countries,) pp. 859-862.

Quartus Index, Hystoricus, (of Laymen,) pp. 863-871.

Quintus Index, Topographicus, pp. 872-885.

Index Moralis, (or, Rerum,) pp. 886-906.

This volume abounds with typographical inaccuracies, especially in the figures, which render the

copious and elaborate indices less satisfactory than they would otherwise be. The pagination from 508 to 533 runs 599 to 610, which also contributes to embarrass the student.

It was the author's intention to publish a great series of volumes entitled

SACRÆ HIBERNIÆ ANTIQUITATES.

The *First*, which never appeared, was to contain a synopsis of the antiquities of Ireland;

The *Second*, which was published in 1647, to contain the Acts of the three patron Saints of Ireland;

The *Third*, which was the present volume, being the *First* of the Acta Sanctorum at large.

The series would, according to the proportion in this volume, have been closed by volume *Six* of the Antiquities, or *Four* of the Acta Sanctorum.

The next, and, if possible, more valuable volume which our author published, bore the following title: TRIADIS THAUMATURGÆ, SEU DIVORUM PATRICII, COLUMBÆ, ET BRIGIDÆ, TRIUM VETERIS ET MAJORIS SCOTIÆ SEU HIBERNIÆ, SANCTORUM INSULÆ, COMMUNIO PATRONORUM, ACTA, a variis iisque pervetustis Sanctis Authoribus Scripta, ac studio R.P.F. Joannis Colgani in Conventu FF. Minor. Hibernor. Strictior. Observ. Lovanii, S. Theologie Lectoris Jubilati, ex variis Bibliothecis collecta, Scholiis et Commentariis illustrata, et pluribus Appendicibus aucta; complectitur Tomus Secundus Sacrarum ejusdem Insulæ Antiquitatum, nunc primum in lucem prodians. Lovanii, apud Cornelium Coenestenum, Anno MDCXLVII.—Fol. pp. 742.

Its contents are thus arranged:—

Dedication to Thomas Fleming, Archbishop of Dublin;

i. *Lives of Saint Patrick*—

1. Fiech's Hymn and Scholia, pp. 1-10;
2. By Patricius, pp. 11-20;
3. By Benignus, pp. 21-35;
4. By Eleranus Sapiens, pp. 35-50;
5. By Probus, pp. 51-64;
6. By Jocelinus, pp. 64-116;
7. Tripartite Life, pp. 117-188;

Appendices, pp. 189-315;

ii. *Lives of Saint Columba*—

1. From Belfortus (Cummineus,) pp. 321-325;
2. Anonymous, erroneously ascribed to Cummineus, pp. 325-331.
3. By John of Tinmuth, from Capgrave, pp. 332-335;
4. By Adamnanus, pp. 336-386;
5. Abridged and translated, from O'Donnellus, pp. 389-453.

Appendices, pp. 454-514.

iii. *Lives of St. Bridgid*—

1. St. Brogan's Hymn, pp. 515-518;
2. By Cogitosus, pp. 518-526;
3. By Ultanus, pp. 527-545;
4. By Animosus, pp. 546-566
5. By Laurentius Dunelmensis, pp. 567-582.
6. By Coelanus, in Hexameter Verse. pp. 582-598.

Appendices, pp. 599-639.

Primus Index Historicus, pp. 640-658.

Index II, Chronologicus, pp. 659-679;

Index III, Historicus, (of Saints' names,) pp. 679-695.

Index IV, Historicus, (of Laymens' names,) pp. 696-705;

Index V, Topographicus, pp. 705-718;

Index, VI, Moralis, (or Rerum,) pp. 719-740;

Table of Errata, two pages.

This volume is open to the same charge of typographical inaccuracy as the former. The author himself notices the "*crassa negligentia impressoris*," at p. 29, *b.* note 1; and a body of notes, "*quas impressor suo loco inserere negligenter omisit*."—p. 639, *a.*

These volumes display a vast amount of learning, and an intimate acquaintance with the language and antiquities of Ireland. But this feature is almost thrown into the shade by the character of honesty and ardour which pervades the work. Colgan was too sincere to allow love of country to warp his honesty of principle, or the establishment of a theory to give a complexion to the materials with which he dealt: hence it is that he is rather credulous than critical, and more disposed to record than to correct the enormities which he had occasionally to encounter. This quality, as with the *Four Masters*, enhances his value as an editor or compiler. Hear his own words, which are worthy of being recorded in gold: "*Quod autem stylo politiore hæc omnia non prodeant, præter nostram tenuem in hac re facultatem, duæ potissimum effecerunt causæ. Prima est, quod ubi acta Sanctorum a priscis scriptoribus res miras et magnas stylo simplici, et sæpè parum Latinè referentibus, sunt compilata, consultius duxerimus primigeniam ipsorum phrasim licet contra Grammaticæ leges sæpius impingentem, retinere, fidei conciliandæ causâ; quam eam indigno commercio in aliam paulo Latiniorem commutare: cum, qui rebus antiquis sunt tempore, ita et in earundem sincera relatione censendi sint veritati propinquiore: et hinc potius styli vetustas, quam venustas, sit in rebus Hystoricis vænanda et veneranda tanquam veritati viciniore.******In his omnibus ipsorum priscorum Scriptorum subjectis testimoniis et verbis uti; tum ut meam liberem fidem, tum ne quispiam fortè existimet Sanctis sibi ignotis recens potius affingi, quam priscis notam, adstrui vel asseri sanctitudinem.*"—*Præfat. ad Lectorem.*

Colgan, also, was devotedly attached to the straitest sect of his religion, yet was he ready to acknow-

ledge literary merit, even in one whose doctrines were diametrically opposed to his, and whom in principle he would condemn as a heretic and intruder. Archbishop Ussher, the glory of the Irish Reformation, he frequently cites as "doctissimus Usserus," and evinces no mean discernment when he writes of the "docti antiquarii, quorum Princeps est Usserus."

Such was the man whom Peter Talbot, a Roman Catholic Archbishop, styled an "Incertorum Corrosor" and William Nicholson, a Protestant bishop, charged with "hooking in most of the old holy-men and women in England and Scotland; so that even Dempster himself could not be more intent on multiplying the Scotch army of saints and martyrs, than Colgan of raising recruits for that of his own native country."—*Irish Historical Library*. These are the words of a flippant critic, who probably never saw the works of Colgan, for he states that "he published *three* large volumes of the lives of some hundreds of saints, that are supposed to be born, or bred, or, at least, who lived some years, in the kingdom of Ireland:"—a very fair claim to citizenship, one would say. But the truth is, no man has ever, since Colgan's time, sat down to treat of Irish history or antiquities, who has been able to do justice to his subject, without having Colgan's volumes at his right hand. O'Flaherty, Harris, Archdall, and Lanigan, have recorded the debt which they owed him. The severe judgment of the present generation of Irish critics, instead of diminishing, has heightened the veneration for this author; and the archæological works of the modern school prove how deep is the respect and gratitude which are entertained towards him in the minds of those most likely to be competent judges.

These volumes have always been exceedingly scarce, and consequently high-priced. The following notice of their occurrence and marketable history may not be unacceptable.

In the library of Trinity College, Dublin, are two copies, one of which formerly belonged to the famous Colbert collection, and is a matchless specimen.

In the library of the Royal Irish Academy, is an excellent and uniform copy of the two volumes, handsomely bound in russia. Also a duplicate volume of the *Acta Sanctorum*, in good condition.

In Primate Marsh's library is a copy in good condition.

In the Dublin Society Library is a copy of the *Trias Thaumaturga*, which formerly belonged to Roderic O'Flaherty, abounding with chronological and other notes, in his own hand, and having some additional observations by Dr. Lanigan. It is not so desirable a copy as the preceding, but its MS. notes place it beyond estimation.

In the libraries of the British Museum, the Bodleian at Oxford, and the Writers to the Signet at Edinburgh, are excellent copies of both volumes.

At public sales the price of the book has latterly averaged Twenty-three pounds. Occasionally, however, it has appeared in a catalogue for a much smaller sum. Thus a copy, which was marked nine guineas in a catalogue of Leslie's, was bought by a Dublin bookseller, and knocked down at Sharpe's auction-room, within a month, to the late William Elliot Hudson, Esq., for £24. Dr. Renahan, purchased a copy in Elephant Lane, for seven pounds. And very lately an *uncut* copy of the

Acta Sanctorum, in *boards*, which had been in the late Rev. Mr. May's possession, was purchased at a bookseller's in Belfast, for one pound!! The beautiful copy of both volumes, bound in Mullan's best style, which was in the late Dr. Elrington's library, was sold at Sharpe's to an English bookseller, for £27. The Stowe copy, which was an indifferent one, sold for £24. The same sum was paid by a gentleman in the county of Antrim, about three years' ago, to Stewart, the London bookseller, for the copy which formerly belonged to the Jesuits' College, in Paris. The *Trias Thaumaturga* of this set is probably the largest in Ireland, being $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches high. One, in which half the title of the scarce volume was deficient, was offered some time ago in London, for £23. A fine copy of the *Acta Sanctorum*, and an indifferent one of the *Trias Thaumaturga*, are in Dr. Todd's library. Mr. Bell, of Dungannon, is possessed of the *Trias Thaumaturga* which was used by the late Dr. Stuart, the historian of Armagh: it is in poor order. A bookstand keeper on the quays of Dublin, some years ago, purchased a very defective copy of the *Trias Thaumaturga*, at a priest's sale, for about a pound, and shortly after buying a lot of old newspaperpapers for a few pence, on going home found among them the missing portion of the book; and next day he manfully refused an offer of £6 for his bargain. There is a copy in the Marquis of Ormonde's library, at Kilkenny, and, if I remember right, at Maynooth. There are two or three in Munster, and possibly one in Connaught; but the above enumeration goes far to exhaust the supply in Ireland.

Colgan, it is to be added, died at Louvain in 1658. And notwithstanding the lapse of eleven years between the publication of his *Trias Thaumaturga*, and his death, there seems to have been no effort made to continue the *Acta Sanctorum*, although that period, according to the rate at which his published volumes appeared, would have sufficed for the completion of the series.

In the interim, however, namely, in 1655, he published in 8vo, at Antwerp, his *Tractatus de Vita, Patria, Scriptis, Johannis Scoti, Doctoris Sublimis*, a work of great rarity now. His two folios bear the names of two different publishers, while this volume was printed at Antwerp; it is possible that the limited demand for the folios, which is indicated by their great rarity, interposed a pecuniary difficulty in the way of any further publication, especially now that Ireland's honour was vindicated, though not fully developed.

Ware states that on inquiry afterwards, he could not discover any manuscript compilation for the succeeding months, although Wadding declares that the volume for April, May, and June, was put to press.

At Louvain, however, were preserved three manuscript-books, in his hand-writing, bearing these titles:

I.—*De Apostolatu Hibernorum inter Exteras Gentes, cum Indice Alphabetico de exteris Sanctis*.—Fol. pp. 852.

II.—*De Sanctis in Anglia, in Britannia Aremorica, in reliqua Gallia, in Belgio*.—pp. 1068.

III.—*De Sanctis in Lotharingia, et Burgundia, in Germania ad sinistram et dextram Rheni, in Italia*.—pp. 920.

These collections, which, it is to be hoped, are still in existence, would be inestimable to the church historian. Some more of Colgan's manuscripts are preserved at St. Isidore's in Rome; and it is affirmed that, by some exertion, the whole Irish collection in that establishment, might be transferred to this country for a limited period, in order to their examination and transcription; than which, next to Dempster's provocative, a greater service could not be rendered to a cause, which, in the absence of true nationality and public spirit, is allowed to languish, and incur all the risks to which unique manuscripts are exposed, which are deposited between the four cardinal points of mischief—Damp, Fire, Rats, and Thieves.